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HER CONVERSION.

"It makes a charming picture undoubtedly. Of course one can not, as an artist, fail to be struck with the ritual of the Romish church, and as a matter of fact, if one believed in Revelation there is no other possible church for a sensible person to belong to."

The speaker was Miss Clare Wynne, an artist by profession. She was essentially a product of the latter end of the nineteenth century. In no other era could she have flourished as she was certainly doing at present. The child of well-to-do people of the upper middle class who had, however, no very strong religious convictions, she had been highly educated as far as her mind went, but her soul had been subjected to a spiritual starvation which resulted in her becoming what she termed a "free-thinker." She was twenty-two now, a bright, winsome, well set up girl with a mild, sweet expression of countenance that was utterly at variance with her pronounced views and self-will, for she was terribly self-willed.

Her companion was a man who towered above her in height and was proportionately built. He was not particularly handsome, but had a pleasing face and a manly, erect carriage. He was Clare's affianced lover, Ernest Ward, the son and heir of a country gentleman of large fortune, and he worshipped Clare with all the strength of his mind and body. He loved her with an intensity of love that did not fall to every one's share and treated her with a reverential tenderness that even she, with all her advanced ideas of woman's equality with the sterner sex, could not but accept as the recognition of her feminine frailty. In theory she repudiated the idea of receiving those small attentions and that delicate courtesy which a chivalrous man delights in paying to womankind; she flattered herself that she would have been better pleased had Ernest met her upon more equal terms, but we doubt nevertheless whether she would have obtained the satisfaction she fondly imagined from such a course of procedure.

The betrothed pair had just left the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Farm street, London, where Ernest had been assisting at benediction and Clare had been feasting her aesthetic soul on the beauties of the ceremony. They were going to Clare's studio to view her latest picture intended for the Royal Academy exhibition. Ernest was looking troubled, as well he might, for the following reasons.

Twelve months previously he had become engaged to Clare Wynne, and now in the meantime he had, during a tour abroad, become convinced of the claims of the Catholic religion to be the only true one. To be convinced with him was a near preliminary to being received into the church, and so today, the feast of Our Lady's Nativity, found him in real truth a sincere Catholic. All his thoughts were now for Clare, but his prayers and efforts for her conversion to Christianity had been so far unavailing.

The studio was reached, and Ernest gently divested Clare of her hat and jacket, she submitting with a very good grace for one of her vaunted opinions.

She had chosen "The Death of St. Agnes" as her subject, and well had her talented brush done the work. "Isn't she lovely!" she cried, drawing aside the curtain which hid her now finished work, and Ernest gazed at it long and rapturously. "What inspiration prompted you to choose that subject?" he asked at length. "If you were a Catholic in heart and soul as well as being the little genius you are, it could not have been done better."

"Oh, flatterer!" exclaimed Clare, but with a heightened color that certainly did not indicate displeasure. "Why should I not take that subject as well as any other from mythology; it is just—" She broke off suddenly as a look at Ernest's face revealed if not actual displeasure at least a certain disappointment. "I beg your pardon," she said, "I'm treading on your pet corn now, am I not? But you know I quite forgot that you believed all these—these things." She had been going to say "fables" from sheer force of habit.

Ernest had recovered. He put his arm round her slender waist and drew her over to the large window. "Poor, little heathen," he said. "If you could only share my happiness to-day!"

"I am very happy," Clare pouted, with a pretty shrug that was more indicative of the spoiled child than of the strong-minded woman of many rights. "Well, let us sit down here," said Ernest, pulling up a lounge. "I want to talk to you seriously." And talk seriously he did, putting before her the responsibilities which had come to him with his new religion. Clare listened to it all with comparative calmness till there came the question of the promise that would be exacted from her of allowing any children of their marriage to be brought up as Catholics. "I could not possibly promise such a thing. I have been very liberal; you know I believe in entire liberty of conscience and creed, and so how could I, acting up to my convictions, how could I allow my children to have their minds biased and their souls trammelled with your so-called religious teachings? No, Ernest, my children should be absolutely free on that point. If when they grew up they chose to conform to any religious belief, I should not prevent them so doing, but I must positively decline to allow what you call religious principles to be dinned into them from their infancy."

Ernest listened to this with a face which was ghastly in its pallor. It meant only one thing to him, and that was—a parting forever from the one woman he had ever loved or ever could love. "You will think it over, Clare, my

darling," he begged, "because as long as you are in your present frame of mind we—I—"

"We can never be more than what we are to each other," she interrupted, rising and looking at him coldly.

"Listen, Clare," he said, taking hold of her small wrist and trying to draw her down to him. "Can not you see what it means to me?"

"It means a lot to your imagination, doubtless," she replied scornfully, drawing away her hand. "Here you bring me quite a supposititious case, and make all this fuss about it. But I have stated my opinions and am not likely to alter them in any way." Slowly she took the diamond ring from her finger and held it out to Ernest, but the hand that offered it trembled a little.

"Take it," she said. "Our engagement is at an end. You are free." "I can not take it, Clare. Don't look at me like that, dearest. Keep it at least till tomorrow." She turned and deposited it on a small tray, saying coldly:

"It is all the same to me." Two minutes later Ernest was gone, and Clare had thrown herself on one of the big rugs on the floor, a heap of sobbing humanity. The next morning's post brought back his ring to Ernest Ward.

The Royal Academy exhibition was over, and Clare Wynne's name was in every one's mouth. She had been congratulated on her extraordinary success until she was tired of hearing about it. Her own youth and beauty in combination with her talent were freely discussed in the public press, but praise or adverse criticism were alike thrown away upon her. She felt that all was vanity and affliction of spirit, and to no one could she turn for comfort.

Ernest was gone she knew not whither, and her heart was filled with bitterness against him. She tried hard to find solace in her work, but though she had her moments of forgetfulness, she could not obtain any permanent relief.

"I have nothing to live for," she would cry out sometimes, and then she would dash down her brushes and weep tears hot and vexatious.

Then again she would resume her work with a feverish energy. She was determined that her fame should spread to all quarters of the globe.

"He will hear of it," she would say to herself. "He will see that I am quite independent of him."

It was during this time that she turned out some of her best work, and Ernest heard of it, as she had thought. Poor Ernest!

Two years had winged their way into eternity when one day Clare received a letter from a distinguished Catholic nobleman asking her to undertake the work of painting the walls of a convent chapel with certain subjects which he would choose.

Clare, who was somewhat run down in health, thought that a few months' sojourn in Devonshire would do her good, so she accepted the commission.

Never would she forget the impression which her first contact with the nuns and convent made upon her.

It was toward the close of autumn, and the trees and hedges displayed a glorious wealth of crimsoning foliage; as she neared the convent, which lay at some distance from the town, a sweet-toned bell rang out upon the peaceful air—it was the compline bell, she was told.

She could see the gray spire of the convent chapel rising above the circle of trees which had hid the rest of the convent buildings from sight, and she began to feel a soothing calm stealing upon her wearied soul.

In the space of a week she became wonderfully at home with the nuns, some of whom were sent to her especially during their recreation hour to walk with and entertain her. When the light waned she would take a book and sit in the small chapel railed off from the sanctuary for the use of externs, and pretending to read, would fall into deep trains of thought, while the nuns in gentle, plaintive tones chanted the divine office.

Often, too, she remained for benediction, and at last was so impressed with the evident sincerity and deep devotion of the nuns that she admitted to herself that this religion which they practiced so assiduously was if not true, at least well founded.

Among the pictures which were to adorn the walls she left to the last that of a full length figure of our Lord showing His Divine Heart, with the inscription written below, "It is all love and mercy." This Clare felt was to be her masterpiece, and she threw her whole heart and soul into the work. As it grew under her hands she loved it. She was irresistibly drawn toward it, and the words which she was to paint beneath it constantly recurred to her mind.

"It is all love and mercy!" One evening Clare had put the finishing touches to her work, and standing at a distance she was examining it critically. The mother piorese came up gently to her side and said softly: "It is beautiful. What must the reality be?"

Clare gave a start. The reality! Yes, surely there was a reality somewhere—surely there was more than the emptiness and weariness which at times weighed upon her so heavily.

She turned suddenly and, clasping the wondering nun in a close embrace, said in piteous tones: "How happy you are—you believe in Him. I believe nothing. Oh, do help me—to believe, too." "Dear child, He will help you Himself. He is all love and mercy," said the nun. "Come here and tell Him all."

Clare, who had burst into tears, suffered herself to be led before the tabernacle

where, sinking down on her knees, she prayed as some one has prayed before: "Oh God, if there be a God, help me to believe."

And there in the still shadow of the sanctuary, with only the light of the little crimson lamp shining upon her, she bowed her beautiful head in very submission.

Not many weeks later the artistic world was all astir with the news of Miss Wynne's "going over to Rome." Knowing as they all did what her opinions were, surprise was the order of the day. "However," remarked one, spitefully, and the sentiment was echoed by many, "there is a very potent factor to be considered—Ernest Ward."

Ernest read the news. He was in Africa, and the paper he saw was a month old. Without losing a day he started on his return to England.

Clare had given him up. For months she had heard nothing of him. She thought he was lost to her, but it was an immense relief for her to think that some day he would know of her newly-found happiness.

One day she had been out, and on returning found a small parcel directed to her in a hand that sent all the pulses of her heart throbbing wildly. With eager, trembling fingers she opened it. Something dropped out and rolled upon the ground.

It was her engagement ring, and in the covering she found Ernest's card. She did not send it back this time.

The next day a well-known step, minus perhaps some of its former confidence, was heard coming up to her studio.

"Ernest!"

"My dearest Clare!" That was all they said, for words would not come. A picture of the Sacred Heart occupies a prominent position in the house of Mr. Ernest Ward and his artist wife.—Catholic Fireside.

NATURAL BRIDGE.

Trip to One of Kentucky's Wonders of Nature and Beauty by Our Correspondent.

[Special Letter to the Kentucky Irish American.]

FRANKFORT, Ky., June 22.—A perfect day, congenial crowd, splendid railroad coaches, courteous railroad officials, a remarkable spot at the journey's end of whose beauties, attractions and natural wonders the half has never been told—these were a few of the many features which went to make the excursion to Natural Bridge on Sunday last a delight while it lasted and something which will live as a pleasant memory to the writer for a long time to come. Nothing was lacking for the day's pleasure, everything connected with the occasion being well nigh perfect. Our train, which pulled out of Frankfort at 9:30 a. m., was composed of eight well-filled coaches of jolly excursionists. After a short run of twenty-eight miles we reached Lexington, the gem of the blue grass, at 10:20 a. m. Our train was then switched from the L. & N. railroad to the L. & E. railway and three more coaches added, and at 10:35 we left over the Lexington & Eastern railway for Natural Bridge. A ride of sixty-two miles up this road is a rare treat and a diversion in itself. The condition of the road is now such that all the unpleasant features of travel have been reduced to a minimum, while the facilities afforded for comfort and enjoyment are many and marked. Leaving Lexington for a time we passed through glorious fields of growing grain and agricultural activity, blooded stock browsing in blue grass pastures or lolling beside some limpid brook, beneath the shade of wondrous forest trees, bespeak one great unrivaled, unquestioned glory of Kentucky. Continuing the journey we passed out of the blue grass region into a section of the State not so famed, although marvelous in the grandeur of its rustic beauty. This is what is commonly called the mountain region of the State, upon whose crags and knolls and beneath whose flinty soil untold millions of timber and mineral wealth repose. Here the scenery is picturesque and often inspiring in its ruggedness. Towering timber-crowned peaks, madly rushing torrents, startling yet beautiful cascades, these tell of the age upon ages gone when Nature battled with herself, of the fabled days of giants and golems, and hold a subtle suggestion of the weird and wondrous strains of "Lo-hengrin."

At Natural Bridge a few people alighted, but nearly all went on to Torrent the Wonderful, that gem of wild mountain scenery, that strange and startling park which Nature played upon her own countenance in some day of awful antiquity. Manager Frazier, of the Park Hotel, was ready and waiting to receive the crowd, and with true graciousness he did so. The uniqueness and grandeur of the scenery surrounding this arch of Nature's torrent baffles description. One can look upon them long and marvel at their strangeness and beauty, and with the looking the wonder grows. All too soon did the pleasant moments speed away and the time for departure come. With a reluctant farewell look the departure was finally taken and good-bye said to Torrent.

Arriving at Natural Bridge in a few minutes all left the train to find amusement for two hours in inspecting the attractions of this wonderful place. Many of the excursionists climbed the mountain and viewed with wonder and delight the grand exhibition of Nature's handiwork, Natural Bridge. Volumes descriptive of the magnificence of the scenery surrounding this wonderful place might be written and the half not be told. It simply defies description and I shall not endeavor to do it. At 6 o'clock we left for home, feeling fully repaid for having ridden 100 miles in crowded coaches. The return trip was pleasantly made and we arrived home at 10 o'clock, happy in the knowledge of having spent a day viewing Nature's wonders. D. J. M.

Frazer has been pitching good ball for Philadelphia this year.

IN LINE OF DUTY.

Corporal Higgins Drowned in Crossing Pasig River to Repel an Attack of the Filipinos.

His Commanding Officer Reports to the Family in a Letter of Condolence to the Father.

That the United States Government looks after every detail of its soldiers, notes and records every event concerning them, and appreciates the love and anxiety of parents and friends regarding them, is manifested in the case of Corporal William L. Higgins, son of the proprietor of the Kentucky Irish American, who was drowned April 30, in the Philippines. The Philippines are 10,000 miles from the national capital, and the meager telegraphic report of the young man's death was all the stricken family could obtain at the time, but were promised a full account as soon as it could be officially made. The following letter has been received from Second Lieutenant John B. Schoeffel, Company B, Ninth U. S. Infantry:

PATEROS, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, May 4, 1899.—Mr. Higgins, Louisville, Ky.—Sir: The sad duty of notifying you of the death by drowning of Corporal William L. Higgins, Company B, Ninth Infantry, befalls me as his company commander.

He was drowned Saturday afternoon, April 30, 1899, while crossing the Pasig river to repel an attack made by the insurgents upon our lines. We were crossing by rafts and the one on which he took passage was overturned; he being unable to swim, was drowned in spite of every effort that was made to save him.

He died in the line of his duty, and every man and officer in this battalion sends his deepest condolence, for he was a true friend, soldier and comrade.

His body was recovered the next day and taken to Manila, where it was buried. He now lies in Battery Knoll, as the military cemetery is called.

I am with deepest regards for your sorrow. Very respectfully,
JOHN B. SCHOEFFEL,
Second Lieut. Ninth Infantry, Commanding Company B.

KILLARNEY.

[CONTINUED FROM FIRST PAGE.]

fishing, and is mentioned as having conferred with James J. Coogan, Mayor Van Wyck and others in regard to the purchase of the estate by subscription. Mr. Roche said: "I don't know but that this matter has become public too soon. Let it be distinctly understood, please, that I am not the promoter of this scheme; that I did not come to this country with my hat held out asking for money to purchase the Muckross estate. As I understand it, it was the report that the estate was to be purchased by one of the Goulds that directed the attention of Mr. Coogan and other Irish-Americans here to this matter, and as I was here and knew more about the property than anybody else, they consulted me about it. Their proposition seemed to be a live one, and so I have taken an interest in it."

"There are about 16,000 acres in the property which it is proposed to purchase, and it embraces all the principal objects of interest to tourists. If an individual should acquire the property and shut it off from the tourists it would mean the wiping out of the Lakes of Killarney as a resort for tourists."

"My idea would be to have the property purchased not only by New York Irish-Americans, but by Irishmen. I would subscribe \$5,000. The cost would be \$130,000. I would suggest presenting it as a park to the 'Kingdom of Kerry,' as we call it, but name trustees for it who should be permanent, say, for instance, the Mayor of New York, the Archbishop of New York and two Irish dignitaries. The park could be made more than self-supporting if a hotel were opened in the Muckross abbey."

CEDAR GROVE.

The Commencement of This Famous Academy and Medals Awarded.

The fifty-seventh commencement exercises of Cedar Grove Academy, Portland, was held in Library Hall Tuesday afternoon, and a full house enjoyed the splendid programme of recitations, dialogues, music and singing of the pupils.

Gold medals were awarded as follows: For punctual attendance, Stella Keyes; deportment, Alice Webb; scholarship, Ernestine West; excellence, Stella Keyes; Christian doctrine, Etta Charlton, senior class; Frances Webb, junior class; elocution, Jennie Edelin, senior, and Ethel Bitzer, junior; music, Ben Stover, first department; Nellie Cunningham, second department; attendance, Mary Eberhardt; good conduct, Stella Keyes and Minnie Greenbaum.

EXCURSION TO INDIANAPOLIS.

The "Big Four Route" announces an excursion to Indianapolis and return for Sunday, June 25, at the very low rate of \$1.50 for the round trip. Special train leaves Seventh-street Union Depot at 8 a. m. Returning train leaves Union Depot, Indianapolis, at 7 p. m. Spend Sunday at the "Hoosier Capital." Tickets on sale at city ticket office, 218 Fourth avenue, and Union Depot, Seventh and river.

NEW CHURCH AT ELIZABETHTOWN.

The church of St. John the Baptist, Elizabethtown, Ky., was dedicated by Bishop McCloskey Monday. The ceremonies were attended by a large crowd, and were solemn and impressive. The choir, assisted by Misses Nellie and Lizzie Chase and others from Louisville, rendered grand music.

THE KENTUCKY IRISH AMERICAN

Will soon celebrate its anniversary, entering upon its Third Volume. The promises made to its readers and friends in the first issue have been faithfully observed, and its circulation has enjoyed a steady growth. This should be increased in the future until it is read in the home of every Irish-American in Kentucky and adjoining States. The Kentucky Irish American for the coming year will make features of

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Society News,
Home News,
Labor News,
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